

Protesters move on to old school site

Group of 15 'reclaim land'... but owners are granted a possession order

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Supporters of Occupy London moved into an empty school site in Finsbury last week.

Since the takeover at the former Moorfields School building in Featherstone Street, Finsbury, the owner of the site, Southern Housing Group, has been granted a possession order on health and safety grounds.

The protesters were set to appeal against the eviction in court today (Thursday).

The site was sold to the developers in 2009 and two applications to transform the land into residential housing blocks have been lodged despite opposition from local residents, who are unhappy

with the design and are keen to keep it for community use.

Occupy supporter Pete Phoenix, one of 15 people sleeping at the site, said: "We're here to reclaim for the public a community resource, at least until planning permission is granted."

He disagrees with grounds for eviction and said: "There have been five caretakers living on the premises without any issue."

Deplorable

The occupiers held an open day on Saturday attended by around 150 local residents to discuss how the space should be used. The school has a gym, classrooms and a basketball court which, while



■ The former site of Moorfields school has been occupied

occupied, will be used for free lectures, youth groups, elderly gatherings, exhibitions and film screenings.

Vince Mitchell, of Featherstone Street, and co-ordinator of Moorfield Residents'

MRAGE is fighting against the planning applications on the basis that the height of the building would be unacceptable.

Mr Mitchell added: "The development would force nearby residents to live in Dickensian dark conditions. It's daylight robbery."

They also argue that the plans leave no provision for public space and devalue what public space there is. A historic cemetery, Bunhill Fields, which is the last resting place of poet William Blake, is adjacent to the site.

Occupy London began in October with an attempt to occupy the London Stock Exchange, leading to the encampment outside St Pauls and in Finsbury Square.

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